

Art Gaze

Autumn 2009

Townsville's
Visual Art Magazine



Farewell a little white space,
welcome Artspaced

Hall of mirrors: Anne Zahalka portraits
1987–2007

Arts Queensland funding for ATSI and
youth projects

Contents

Art Gaze Magazine

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Anne Zahalka
Detail of *The girls #2*,
Cronulla Beach, 2007
Courtesy of
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

Tonite we RUN

Jak Henson finds out what the six members of the *Run* collective are planning.

4

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art funding in north Queensland

Rod Welford from Arts Queensland recently visited Umbrella Studio to make an announcement.

5

Hall of mirrors: Anne Zahalka:portraits 1987–2007

Eric Nash gives us a preview into what we can look forward to seeing in the flesh in April.

6

Talent shines at TAFE's annual art exhibitions

2008 TAFE students were excited at their end of year exhibition and awards night.

8

Farewell a little white space, welcome *Artspaced*

Jacqui Stock finds out about Jeanette Hutchinson and Shane Keen's new art venue.

9

Interview with two artists

Jacqui Stock talks to Katrina Robino and John Goodson.

11

Wired 4 games - Dr Nicola Bidwell

Bernadette Ashley learns about Bidwell's concept for artwork in games.

13

Reviews

Broken Spirit

Larry Underwood

Reviewed by Bernadette Ashley

15

The nude

Reviewed by Quintin Wood

17

Collectors

Reviewed by Sue Tilley

18



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From the editor



2009 is here and already into Autumn. It's going to be an exciting year for art with the biennial Strand Ephemera later in the year, installing public art along The Strand, and the Venice Biennale will be an international highlight for both the artists who travel to Venice and the others, like myself, who can't wait to hear the stories.

I recently spent an afternoon with local and internationally acclaimed artist Anneke Silver in her studio and got an insight into her schedule for 2009. Between national shows, tours and international residencies and exhibitions, Anneke is definitely going to have an action-packed year. It's always enjoyable to

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have the opportunity to spend time in another artist's studio, which I will write more about in the winter issue of *Art Gaze*.

As you may have heard, a *Little White Space* (ALWS) is no longer operating due to renovations in The Brewery, but fortunately Townsville has not lost Jeanette Hutchinson's (ALWS manager/curator) passion for art. Jeanette has teamed up and reopened in a new location.

I am continually surprised how many people in Townsville are involved in the arts and while I used to spend the summer period watching the cricket, due to continual art events, openings and new artwork created over the last few months in Townsville, I haven't followed a game.

Art Gaze magazine will be published each season in 2009 to try and keep up with the growing local arts scene.



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TONITE WE RUN

Arts Queensland has granted funding to six Townsville artists
for their youth-orientated project



Parking lot behind Umbrella Studio
Photo: Run collective

Six local artists have formed a collective known as *Run* and, through Arts Queensland, received funding of over \$20,000 to create an interactive open-air art studio, hold workshops and put together a site-specific installation within the space. The studio space, which is currently under construction, is the parking lot directly behind Umbrella Studio on Flinders Street.

Beginning production of the initiative in December 2008, the members of *Run* have been painting existing walls, building divider walls, planning their collaborative works and filming the process. The space is open to the public and *Run* are encouraging people to wander in, ask questions and get involved with the action.

The public involvement in the studio space and the final exhibition are aimed towards encouraging and inspiring Townsville's youth. The six artists are between 19 and 25 years old and, catering to the youth culture, the collective has also joined Facebook for people to keep up to date with the progress of the space (see website below). In a discussion with two members of *Run*, who are also involved with providing administrative and committee

support to Umbrella Studio, it was commented that the amount of members that had joined *Run*'s Facebook in the first week was unbelievable.

The artwork that will make up the final exhibition within the space will consist predominantly of aerosol art, while also including installations and multimedia work. Over the four month production period, the main wall of the space, which is over 18 m long, will be painted and repainted numerous times for the creation of short animations. Finally, each artist will paint an approximate 3 m length of the wall to portray a street-art styled self-portrait, expressing their journey as an artist and a member of society.

While the artists are working towards their final exhibition, the project encompasses not only the finished product, but also the community involvement, the running of workshops and the concept of creating professional aerosol art in a space that will be transformed into a gallery. Photographs will be taken to document progress and much of the process will be filmed in order to create a multimedia work that captures the development of *Tonite We RUN*.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=44194853333&ref=mf>

Jak Henson

Tonite We RUN
opens 27 March 2009



Preparation for *Tonite We RUN*
Photo: Run collective



Preparation for *Tonite We RUN*
Photo: Run collective



Preparation for *Tonite We RUN*
Photo: Run collective

ABORIGINAL AND TORRESS STRAIT ISLANDER ART FUNDING IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

When the Queensland state Cabinet convened in Townsville recently, the Minister for the Arts, Rod Welford, used the opportunity to visit Umbrella Studio to elaborate on Indigenous Arts Funding in the far north.

The event, on Sunday, 1 February, was well attended despite the incessant rain and threat of a cyclone.

The Minister, Townsville Councillors Jenny Lane and Ray Gartrell, along with representatives of the city's arts and cultural community, were welcomed to country by Biri elder Ms Gracelyn Smallwood.

Just over \$1million funding has been allocated this financial year, shared among nine arts centres and three arts hubs, allowing councils and organisations to develop specific programs for their local communities, Welford told the gathering at Umbrella.

He announced the recipients of the latest round of grants from Backing Indigenous Arts, a body supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, a bilateral agreement between the federal and state governments. Funded projects include exhibitions, artist-in-residence opportunities, cultural festivals, workshops to build skills, and an Indigenous art fair.

Gail Mabo's dance company has received funding to develop a full-length dance production. *Koiki* will round out the story of her father, Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo, remembering him as a family man and in the context of his Torres Strait culture, rather than as the Native Title campaigner whose name is synonymous with the landmark court ruling, she explained.

Performers from Mabo's Western Blue Dance company shook the floor with renditions of two pieces combining contemporary and cultural moves to accompanying traditional song and percussion.

A film shot and edited by Torres Strait filmmaker Ben Southwell was projected onto a large screen, which formed the backdrop for the duration of the event. It documented the series of printmaking master classes hosted by Umbrella in the second half of 2008.

Umbrella director, Vicki Salisbury, explained how the master classes were made possible by BIA funding through Arts Queensland. The workshop facilitators were well-known artists who all have Indigenous links to the region; Alick Tipoti, Arone Meeks, Theo Tremblay and Danie Mellor, who guided the workshop participants through a variety of printmaking techniques. As well as a planned exhibition at Umbrella in July this year, the master classes had an unexpected spin-off, which Salisbury was obviously delighted to announce:

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) has purchased Townsville's Holiday Inn, affectionately known as The Sugar Shaker, and is renovating the hotel, incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait art throughout.

Umbrella is to oversee the production of a major collection of limited edition works on paper by ten artists. Four hundred of the works are to be purchased by IBA for what has been dubbed 'The Sugar Shaker Project'.

'This is a dream project and an opportunity to showcase the wealth of talent of artists from this area,' claimed Salisbury.

Although unrelated to Indigenous arts funding, both Welford and Salisbury also congratulated the youth arts *Run* collective, who were awarded a substantial grant to stage a street art project at Umbrella during March, titled *Tonite We RUN*.

Bernadette Ashley

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hall of mirrors: anne zahalka portraits 1987 - 2007
24 april until 21 june
a nets victoria touring exhibition developed by
the centre for contemporary photography

Images (L-R): Sina Ural. Production still from *O Tamati*. 1990. 35mm film and Delacian SP format. 15 minutes. Black and white, stereo. Purchased 2004. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant. Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / Stephen Dupont. *Dili burns as a displaced man pushes a cart with a small child on board*. East Timor. Dili. September 1999. Back and white photograph / Anne Zahalka. *Marriage of Convenience* (Graham Budgett and Jane Mulligan/artists) 1987. from the series *Resemblance*, obochrome photograph. Courtesy the artist. Roslyn O'Leary Gallery (Sydney) and Arc One Gallery (Melbourne)

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HALL OF MIRRORS: ANNE ZAHALKA PORTRAITS 1987–2007

Coming to Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in April 2009



Anne Zahalka
Sunday, 2:09pm, 1995
Photograph
Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

...While we might want to read into the person presented before us in the photograph, through their face and eyes—the so-called ‘window to the soul’—there is no real way of knowing. Everything else in the picture however is a clue.

In speaking with Curator Karra Rees, Anne Zahalka underlines the game she plays within her portraits, and with her viewer, that has made her work so intriguing in a career spanning over twenty years. *Hall of Mirrors: Anne Zahalka Portraits 1987-2007* provides a greater opportunity to appreciate this particular thread of Zahalka's photography, or what Dr Daniel Palmer describes as a ‘new angle on her broader body of work.’

Hall of Mirrors draws work from fourteen series that span Zahalka's career. These include earlier series such as *Resemblance* and *Bondi: Playground of the Pacific*, which helped establish her reputation, more recent self-portraits that have not been on display prior to this travelling exhibition, and portraits commissioned specifically for the show.

Throughout *Hall of Mirrors* the viewer is drawn equally to setting and subject, as described by Naomi Cass, Director of Centre for Contemporary Photography,

In the portraits of Anne Zahalka, the burden of scrutiny is evenly distributed across the sitter and the setting, and our attention is endlessly rewarded.

This is central to Zahalka's practice, as she explores the camera's ability to distort the truth, and challenge our perception of how much is real and how much is fiction. In doing so, she also challenges what can truly be learnt about a person through a portrait:

The making and taking of portraits is such a contrivance. There is nothing natural about the process, yet the aim is for it to appear so and for the subject to appear natural and unselfconscious... I give very little direction to my sitters – I prefer to let them find their own way of sitting. Increasingly I am more interested in

the unease expressed in the pose. It is confronting to see oneself in a bad light so to speak and even more confronting when we know this is how we may appear to others (even if we don't see ourselves this way). The photograph is evidence and in this case it doesn't lie. But a photographic portrait is also only one moment in the course of a sitting and many expressions pass across the face during this time.

In stating this, Zahalka makes it clear how she is able to play this game with her viewers – after all, how much can we claim to know about a person from viewing them in just a single moment, particularly a moment in which they are so ill at ease. In this, the



Anne Zahalka
Marriage of convenience (Graham Budgett and Jane Mulfinger / artists), 1987
 Photograph
 Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery



Anne Zahalka
The photographer (self-portrait)
 Photograph
 Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

setting becomes just as, if not more, important than the figure in trying to gauge what is real.

Such tactic is particularly evident in works from Zahalka's *Open House* series, which provide extremely intimate views of the home environment. The works are once again a collision of the contrived behaviours of the occupants which would normally provide us with intimate insight into their behaviour, and the very real interiors. The interiors provide clues to the subjects' lives—interests, beliefs, habits, fashion, personal history—and through these clues the subject is defined.

In some ways I see the subject as just another object in the room – I know this sounds appalling! While I am concerned with subjects and what they project through their setting and their performance, I am equally interested in the stuff that surrounds them and what this says about them. Ensnared with their 'worldly possessions' they speak about their passions, their wealth (or lack of) and their place in the world.

A different form of play between setting and sitter is adopted for Zahalka's *Scenes from the Shire* series. Photographed at Cronulla, the series follows on from *Bondi: Playground of the Pacific*, in which the sitter was photographed in front of painted beach scenes. In *Scenes from the Shire*, however, the subjects are used more as actors and set against the actual surf, with Zahalka keen to revisit the beach in light of the Cronulla riots that had taken place;

I wanted to revisit the beach following the aftermath of the Cronulla riots and see what signs of racism might exist there. Like most people I was horrified when racial violence erupted there a year ago on such a mythologised site of our nation, the beach...I became more interested in using the location as a kind of ready-made set to place my figures in or against, thereby contextualising them in a real place. While the portrait still appears staged there is the obvious participation of the subject. I think this gives these portraits an interesting tension between being part of the scene yet performing in it.

The works in *Hall of Mirrors* frequently reference art history, political issues, and provide insight into intimate home settings. They both challenge and celebrate the capacity of the portrait, and raise questions about the authenticity of information gained from a photograph. Zahalka's work is a game played out on many levels, not simply the play between sitter and setting. However, it is this common thread that runs through her portraits that sets her work apart.

Eric Nash

Hall of Mirrors: Anne Zahalka Portraits 1987–2007 will be on display at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery from 24 April 2009. (A NETS Victoria touring exhibition developed by the Centre for Contemporary Photography.)

TALENT SHINES AT TAFE'S ANNUAL ART EXHIBITIONS

Cultural arts and visual art students from the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE emerged as local artists at their end of year exhibitions in 2008, titled, *One Blood* and *Reality*.

The public exhibitions featured the work of over 65 TAFE students enrolled in the certificate IV and diploma of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts, as well as the certificate III and IV in Visual Art & Contemporary Craft.

Hosted by the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville, students showcased their cultural interpretations and personal responses to art using the following disciplines: Painting; printmaking; illustration; design; drawing; digital art; sculpture and ceramics. TAFE's Director of Studies, Wendy Lang said.

Through exhibiting their work in a regional gallery, the students were able to develop networks in industry and establish themselves in the community as emerging artists...Over 75 percent of the unique art pieces were sold.

Visual Art & Contemporary Craft, 2008 Student of the Year awards were presented to: Catherine Ogden, Donna Beningfield, Edward O'Brien, Hannah Storronning, Jacqui Dyson, Kyana Pike, Lara Johnstone, Laura Castell Perez, Pirjo Juhola, Sarah Jennings and Simon Reid.

Sandy Simmonds



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FAREWELL *A LITTLE WHITE SPACE*, WELCOME *ARTSPACED*

'...the idea can be moved to anywhere...'

'...it's about finding spaces for art...'



Jeanette Hutchinson and Shane Keen preparing the new venue for *Artspaced*
Photo: Jacqui Stock

The beginning of 2009 sent waves of surprise through the Townsville arts community when the demise of a *little white space* at the Brewery on Flinders Mall was announced.

The artist-run space provided opportunities for over 2 years to emerging and established artists, holding small achievable exhibitions through the efforts and financial support of curator/managers, Jeanette Hutchinson and Erwin Cruz, with the help of sponsor, Casper Schougard from TBD, who printed the invitations for shows and offered advice about marketing tools.

Local artists also contributed, offering their support on a voluntary basis. Hutchinson remarked that there had been 'lot's of love' involved in the running of the space.

Using knowledge gained while helping at artist-run spaces in her previous home of Melbourne, Hutchinson met with the management of The Brewery in 2006 with a proposal for a new gallery. The idea was accepted and a *little white space* was born. The Brewery provided the space as well as catering for

exhibition openings and in return received the patronage of the arts community.

As a non-profit organisation, the gallery charged a small commission on art sales, which funnelled back into the gallery to provide the necessary materials, such as paint, plaster and hanging tools for the various works shown.

With exhibitions booked a year in advance, it was quite a shock for Hutchinson and her new right hand man, Shane Keen, to suddenly find themselves without a venue.

Keen filled the position vacancy after Cruz moved to Brisbane in late 2008, although Cruz keeps in touch regularly and may be curating an exhibition later in the year.

Due to renovations requiring the closure of The Brewery, a management decision was made to close the venue for an extended period, which officially spelt the end of a *little white space*.

Daunted but not knocked down, Hutchinson immediately began sourcing another place and after discussions with Dance North Australia's general manager, Joanne Fischer, and philanthropy manager, Jodie Conner, the gallery, complete with its new name, *Artspaced*, will now occupy several areas of the Stanley Street complex.

The fresh start was behind the renaming of the space, when Keen and Hutchinson realised it wasn't about the physical venue, it was about finding new spaces for art. Hutchinson commented:

It's all about having space, it's about the concept, the idea can be moved to anywhere the art can fit, it's about finding spaces for art...

Hutchinson and Keen are hard at work readying the new gallery for its opening night, expected to be held in late February/early March, when the exhibitions program will resume. The opening will see three exhibitions running concurrently; a group exhibition of multimedia works will be held downstairs and two solo exhibitions highlighting painted and mixed media works will show in the upstairs space.

The new venue will also extend the gallery's opportunities and will be run in collaboration with Dance North Australia's own Dance North Art project (DNA), which will be coordinated by Karen Skoczylas, who has recently relocated to Townsville from Brisbane.

Opportunities now abound with not only the downstairs space available to artists but also the upper floor of the venue. It is envisaged that some exhibitions may also be coordinated to work in with the various other productions to be seen at the expanding arts venue.

The new gallery area, as could be expected, is somewhat quirky and has many of the features that made a *little white space* such an interesting venue. The arched windows and high ceilings so admired in The Brewery are also seen in the new space as the architecture is of the same era. An added plus is the outdoor space where patrons can relax and discuss the exhibitions in comfort and, of course, the downstairs bar adjacent to the space is sure to be appreciated.

Along with the new venue will be a new website, another venture for the gallery, which will enable the public as well as artists to be better informed about exhibition dates, what's coming up and contact details for those wishing to exhibit in future. Until this is up and running, the curators Hutchinson and Keen can be contacted via artspaced@gmail.com.

Hutchinson remarked that with all of the venue's conveners now speaking the same language and having a common goal of improving the arts in the region, the move can only be a good thing for Dance North Australia, Artspaced, exhibitors and their patrons.

Jacqui Stock



ARTSPACED
(formerly - a little white space)

CHRIMAS PROPAGANDA SHOW
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INTERVIEW WITH TWO ARTISTS

Katrina Robino and John Goodson



Katrina Robino
Photo: Jacqui Stock

Have you ever wondered what happens to artists once graduation is over and they have their degree hot in their hands? I've taken the opportunity to speak to two such artists who would never have predicted the current twist to find a balance between their search for artistic achievement and their need to pay the bills. Illustrator, Katrina Robino, and actor and puppeteer extraordinaire, John Goodson's, journey has found them currently looking through fences crowned with razor wire as they teach behind bars at Cleveland, Townsville's Youth Correctional Centre. Their story illustrates just some of the unexpected opportunities available to artists in the world after university.

Jacqui Stock: When did you first know that you wanted to be an artist?

Katrina Robino (Trina): As soon as I was able to pick up a pencil. I've drawn my whole entire life; in fact, it quite distracted my school studies, as my teachers would tell you. Drawing is my life and I still practice art even though I'm not exhibiting.

John Goodson (Goodo): I've always wanting to be an artist, for as long as I can remember. When I was little, I used to write poems. Then in high school, I wanted to be a great painter—oblivious to the fact that I wasn't very good. I didn't get into an art course at uni, so I got into theatre instead, thinking that I'd concentrate on lighting and stage design, but got swept up in acting.

Jacqui: Where would you say your principle interests in the arts lie?

Trina: I quite like music and drama, I'm not so sure about performance art, it's not quite my thing but definitely visual arts.

Goodo: Theatre, most definitely theatre, including puppet theatre, and music. Plus I've started writing some children's stories which Trina is illustrating.

Jacqui: How did you set about becoming an artist?

Trina: When my children were small and I was on my own, I decided there had to be something more to life and at that time I had dreams of making a wonderful profession out of being an

artist so I applied to do a University course and a TAFE course, I didn't have much confidence. It was quite daunting. I lined up with all these people straight out of high school who had portfolios and I thought 'Oh, I've only got six pictures' which I thought were pathetic, but the lecturers had more confidence in me and as it was I got straight into Uni.

Goodo: I studied Theatre at JCU [James Cook University], after which I worked with Tropic Line Theatre and the Billabong Puppet Theatre. Before uni, I sang in the town choir and was in community plays (Coral Society type of stuff).

Jacqui: How did this affect your approach to making art?

Trina: My degree started me on the way to discovering what you could do, exploring ways of doing art, getting ideas, I found it quite stimulating to be around other arts.

Goodo: Uni gave me skills and knowledge, but more importantly, gave me a professional way of doing things. It also gave me the perspective that artistic endeavours aren't just the fun stuff you do, or simply self-expression, but that they can have (and perhaps should have) a higher goal.

Jacqui: How did studying change your focus, did you find any particular area of art in which to specialise?

Trina: No, I don't feel that there should have to be boundaries, if you want to do sculpture, do sculpture, if you want to paint or



Katrina Robino
Beauty and the beast

draw, do so, although I still find drawing the most satisfying. I can pick up a pencil and draw anytime. I'm principally an illustrator and I took painting as my minor at uni, so I suppose that's my main area of focus.

Goodo: Yep. It was through uni that I became focused on acting and theatre...and through contacts made at uni that I became involved in puppetry. Partying at uni got me into playing loud music in obnoxious rock bands.

Jacqui: Where would you say you are in regards to your arts practice now?

Trina: I still practice art, if not every day, I try to do something at least once a week. I try to incorporate it into my teaching, it's a very useful tool to engage students and inspire them to learn.

Goodo: Now that I'm a teacher, my artistic practices are less than they were before, but I'm enjoying using my experience and knowledge to help kids learn to express themselves, and to engage, to ask questions and to chase answers. I'm still keeping my hand in as an artist though – I'm working on some children's books, composing music for an upcoming *JUTE* and Tropic Sun theatre production called *CAKE*, I do a little bit of acting here and there and do the occasional puppet show. The urge to engage in artistic endeavours is unceasing.

Jacqui: Where do you see yourself in the future?

Trina: I would eventually like to be practising art full-time, I'm working on a project with John, who has written a book which I am illustrating and you never know, if we get published that might kick start my illustration career.

A lot will depend on finances, I may need to teach part-time to pay the bills but although I love it, the one thing teaching has shown me is that art is my passion.


Goodo: I want to continue to broaden my perceptions of what is possible in the art world, and to continue to develop skills and experiences in different art forms. I want to use art (especially theatre, film and music) as educational tools to help people engage with the community and have the courage to think outside the box and to experience outside of the box, cause that's what arts is, the great unboxer.

Jacqui: Finally, is there anything you would have done differently?

Trina: I would definitely have started on my arts career earlier so as to have had more time to devote to getting my career up and running.

Goodo: Not at all. I'm very happy with the journey I've taken so far, and I'm looking forward to the rest of it.


Jacqui Stock



Above: Robyn Voshart and Sven Humphrey *Parametabolic* 2007
Below: Rex Australia *Maang Message Stick* 2007



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WIRED 4 GAMES - DR NICOLA BIDWELL

'...interactive systems...

*...evoke some of the feelings and sensations
people have in natural environments...'*

Have you ever noticed the lack of variety in the 'natural' (non-urban) spaces in electronic games? Had difficulty navigating your avatar because every tree was indistinguishable from the next clump of polygons?

Dr Nicola Bidwell, senior lecturer in IT at James Cook University (Cairns) and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) design researcher, wants to assist in designing *'...interactive systems to make them compatible with people's "natural" and joyful acquisition and use of information in the world'*.

Wayfinding in both the physical world and virtual worlds is a focus of Bidwell's research group. They have devised some unique methods of collecting data as people find their way around rural environments; to begin to understand what people feel, and how they acquire, use and communicate information as they navigate; then apply this feedback to the design of electronic games to make the games more natural and relaxing to the user.

Cairns JCU campus' rainforest location is serendipitous to Bidwell's research, as she has a particular interest in creating interactive experiences which... *'evoke some of the feelings and sensations people have in natural environments (e.g. the rainforests, savannahs and beaches of FNQ)'*

An unconventional approach Bidwell's group has utilised is video cameras embedded in sunhats to gather data about people's visual experiences and memories of natural places.

Another is a 'mixed reality' game in which the player uses basic commands to remotely navigate their avatar (another person fitted with a video camera) on a treasure hunt through an area of rainforest. The player observes the terrain through the avatar's view via real time video feed to their laptop.

While this all appears to be too much fun to be research, important information is collected by observing the behaviours and strategies the players use to compensate for the limitations of the experiment. It also introduces the possibility of developing photoreal gameworlds, where those clumps of polygons would no longer impede the players' sense of reality or interrupt the flow of a game experience.

Bidwell will elaborate on her research at the Art U Game Forum at Pinnacles Gallery on February 28. Also on the panel are Jason Nelson, a cyber poet and net artist who lectures at Griffith University and designs virtually indescribable online games; and Tom Ellard of UNSW College of Fine Arts, who specialises in sound for games.

The Forum is a special event organised to complement the *Wired 4 Games* exhibition. Curated by Anthony Edwards, the show brings eight online games from around the world into the gallery, a concrete demonstration of how games design is being more widely recognised as intersecting with art.

Bidwell also sees the intersection of a wide range of disciplines in her research, explaining, *'...my position is one of*



interconnections, from which no single separate “thing” can be successfully extricated or demarcated...’

‘There are several paradigms in HCI,’ she continues, ‘and where I sit is sometimes called the third paradigm; drawing on arts, sociology and cultural theory much more than traditional, science and engineering-based approaches.’

The first and second paradigms stem from science, engineering, and cognitive science. The third paradigm is a fairly recent wave of thought only just beginning to find general acknowledgement in the HCI field. It deals with ... *participatory design, situated action, ethnography, and value-sensitive design, which arise from phenomena the other two waves find difficult to handle, such as embodiment, situated meaning, values, and social issues...* according to the HCI Journal.

A scientist in her ‘previous incarnations’, Bidwell studied biology and psychology in Scotland, has a doctorate in sensory neurophysiology from the University of London, before a change of direction and a masters of IT at the University of Queensland.

She feels her earlier scientific preoccupations do not strongly inform her current work, now describing herself as a phenomenologist. Phenomenology is a method of philosophical inquiry centred on ‘lived experience’, relying more on an individual’s immediate and intuitive grasp of knowledge than a rationalist or reductionist view.

(In art terms, Bidwell suggests *Impressionism* as a phenomenological approach. *Cubism* and *Constructivism* instead draw on rationalism.)

Bidwell’s JCU staff profile confirms she has lived, worked and adventured all over the world, from Ethiopia to Moscow, to the Galapagos Islands. This perhaps informs her inclusiveness of cultural views other than the predominating Western (largely urban) view in her approach to her work. She has worked with Australian Indigenous and African cultural groups and continues to develop ideas for technology applicable to rural and geographically remote areas.

Bidwell is obviously working to make all our worlds, physical and virtual, better places.

Bernadette Ashley

Wired 4 Games exhibition at Pinnacles Gallery
until 15 March 2009

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Broken Spirit

Larry Underwood

Umbrella Studio, Townsville

30 January – 8 March 2009

Obviously embarrassed by the no-show of *Broken Spirit's* front man Larry Underwood, Bank Court Studio CEO Anthony Edwards did his best to smooth things over at the 30 January opening at Umbrella Studio of an exhibition documenting the making of Underwood's first album in fifteen years.

Edwards maintained a cheerful front and continued the formalities dutifully, albeit with one eye on the door, until interrupted by a call to his mobile phone. He then informed the bemused gallery that due to an unfortunate accident involving a glass shower door, Underwood would not be appearing that night. Quickly wrapping up the exhibition opening and album launch, Edwards kept up a professional demeanour while rumours of his protégé's relapse into substance abuse circulated.

Separating fact from the legend surrounding Larry Underwood is difficult. A pioneer of a genre he claims to have named *industrial metal*, Underwood was '...the Nine Inch Nails of his era,' according to Edwards.

Underwood is *Broken Spirit*.

He is the creative force who composes all the music, is the guitarist and lead singer, and designs the cover art, t-shirts, everything. He works with session musos, but essentially he was and is the band.

An excerpt from a music magazine review featured in the exhibition suggests that Underwood lived hard and eventually almost self-destructed:

Larry Underwood left the world of music a broken man... nothing was seen of him for fifteen years. He became one of the departed and stories of his antics became the stuff of myths and legends...but now he's back, bigger better stronger if



Larry Underwood
Detail of *Blood moon heart*
Courtesy of Anthony Edwards

the initial reviews of his latest *Broken Spirit* album 'Thinning the Predators' can be believed. (*Rolling Rock*, Feb 2008)

While Edwards must have had enough confidence in Underwood to allow Bank Court Studio to produce the comeback album, he appeared to be annoyed rather than surprised when Underwood failed to attend his own show at Umbrella. Edwards' contribution to the documentary aspect of the show includes atmospheric photographs of a tattooed Underwood, and studio vignettes taken during the production of the album. One of Edwards' works is a five frame composition; a still life of whisky bottle, glass, a bowl of pistachio shells, and a colourful pill packet with some empty cells. The frames progress from crystal

clear to blurry. It is one of the few bright images of the entire exhibition, but perhaps also one of the darkest and most telling psychologically.

Much of the multimedia exhibition is dedicated to the visually dense digital cover art of Underwood. His choice of motifs – blood, skulls, graves, 'babes' and weapons – is unexceptional considering his musical genre is metal, and such images are the staple visual vocabulary of that particular subculture. However, many of the motifs are manipulated and overlaid to the point of abstraction, developing a dark and moody ambience, and even touches of psychedelic or hallucinatory effects.

Perspex cases contain the drafts of the *Thinning the Predators* fold-out CD

insert. These downsized versions of the larger digital artworks are annotated with the handwritten exchanges between Underwood and Edwards as they negotiate the aesthetic of the final version. Some of the notes are quite amusing and increasingly sarcastic as two visions clash and patience wears thin. Once again it appears Edwards has his hands full managing the capriciousness of the former star trying to reinvent himself, and seeking to control his image.

Several music videos from *Thinning the Predators* were projected onto a large screen in the centre of the gallery for the opening and are looping on a video monitor daily for the remainder of the exhibition.

These are also the creative works of Underwood, who devised, produced, directed and shot the footage himself.

The first is inspired by the clip *Just One Fix* by another industrial metal outfit, Ministry. The handheld camerawork imbues the video with immediacy as we observe bites of fires, cemeteries, an empty swing set, a child riding a tricycle and road views from a car driving through heavy rain. Effects used include colour reverse, negative images and rewinding.

Another video recalls the 60s psychedelic art films, as intensely black and red 'ink blots' swirl, blob, fracture and pulsate to the music.

While Edwards has provided the behind-the-scenes photographs of the *Predators* recording process, he is also responsible for the marketing element of the exhibition. CDs and a variety of Underwood-designed T-shirts are on show and available for sale.

The printed insert from the album is available free as an exhibition catalogue, but the song lyrics printed within are virtually unreadable, the tiny font overwhelmed by the busy artwork. Listening to the album did not provide much enlightenment regarding the lyrics. Admittedly, I am not a metal fan, but I couldn't help sensing this obfuscation was deliberate. There appears to be scant conceptual cohesiveness under-pinning the album itself. A slogan scrawled (presumably by Underwood) on one wall hung with a black electric guitar reads, appropriately, *Upon this axe I have ground my soul until there was nothing left but this empty soul*. Underwood seems, for reasons best known to himself, to be playing down his music in favour of his visual artwork.

Several reviews and profiles of Underwood and Broken Spirit by metal music industry magazines *Hammered Metal*, *Berzerker* and *Rolling Rock* are on display. Despite the adage that any publicity is good publicity, one wonders why studio head Edwards would choose to display a review which ends:

Larry this is about the money and you and your album are as derivative as the pop princesses that dominate the world music market...we know Larry's story just seemed too good. (*Rolling Rock*, Feb 2008)

Footnote: Interestingly, Bank Court Studio CEO Anthony Edwards also finds time to be the officer of exhibitions at Pinnacles Gallery, and a practising painter, sculptor and installation artist...

Bernadette Ashley



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The Nude

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery,
Townsville

19 December 2008 –15 February
2009

A recent exhibition at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery (PTRG), *The Nude* portrays the human body in a variety of media, techniques and individual artist interpretations. This was the goal of Leah McManus whose curation of the exhibition fulfilled a component of her arts administration traineeship. Searching for inspiration for what originally was to be a drawing exhibition, McManus was drawn primarily to the figure works in PTRG's own collection. Collaborating with colleagues Frances Thomson (Director of PTRG), Jo Lankester and Eric Nash, McManus outsourced to James Cook University, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery and private collections, including four editions from Ron McBurnie's collection, to help fulfil the exhibition of drawings, prints, paintings, photographs and sculptures. The PTRG collection included works gifted from Tate Adams, Ray Crooke and Dr Nita Vasilescu. Though finding many works she liked, McManus admitted the final selection had to be culled and decided to concentrate mainly on the works from North Queensland artists.

The didactics by Eric Nash bind the exhibits together offering a brief background in the development of the nude through history. The exhibition becomes a celebration of history, demonstrating the innovative methods in which artists explore the beauty of figure. *The Nude* comes ironically soon after photographer Bill Henson's controversial exhibition which displayed a nude thirteen year old girl. On loan from Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, the exhibition includes one photograph of Henson's of a less controversial nature. McManus' exhibition, which was derived two weeks prior to Henson's display in Sydney, does not deter public opinion on Henson's work. This exhibition simply displays the more accepted nude form—being that of an adult—drawn, painted or sculpted in non-compromising positions. However, the didactics for *The*



Amanda Feher
Within You
Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

Nude may unintentionally provide the public with insight into the differences of nude and naked in art.

Shifting perspective, the other artists featured in *The Nude* exhibition celebrate the figure in a myriad of ways. Anneke Silver's works *Pacific Morning 1* and *Pacific Morning 2* challenge right brain thinking by using left brain elements. Silver's technique of placing light line against heavy line, loose curves

against sharper curves and particularly vibrant colours beside darker colours effectively create shadow and a sense of depth. Geometric forms begin to appear among non-geometric lines, shape and shadow. This leads the viewer's eye to the focal point of the works. Silver manages to capture the essence of figure without drawing on unnecessary detail.

Although stealing much acclaim in the exhibition, Alison McDonald's sculptures are not dominating over the whole. *Olympia*, made from recycled brass and steel keys, and *The Bather* or *The Hooker*, made from steel cup hooks, each represent close to four months of work for the artist. Through recycling in her art, McDonald has become a strong advocate for environmental issues in her local community. Beyond this, however, her works have always contained a deeper underlying meaning. These works depict the nude woman of traditional beginnings in shape and form yet, by the use of medium, also force the viewer to consider the mystery



Anneke Silver
Pacific morning II
Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

of woman. Do the keys represent the woman as a locked mystery? Or is she an open flower of beauty?

Line drawings create much of the impact in the exhibition, especially works such as Thea Proctor's *Nude* (ink on paper), which is a simple study of form. Other works, such as Amanda Feher's *Within You*, give a deep emotional impact. With an elaborate imagination for titling, Gerald Soworka amuses the audience and presses us to engage with his work *Atheists and flapping birds intimidate her and other people's nudity offends her*. Glen Skien confronts us with a disturbing series and Euan Macleod stirs shadowy and sorrowful sensations. Drawing a little attention are etchings and drawings from national artists: Arthur Boyd, John Brack, Kevin Conner and Fred Williams. Other artists include Charles Blackman, Daphne Cazalet, Clem Forbes, Dorothy Forbes, Douglas Green, David Hockney, Liz Loder, Francis Lyburner, Carla Pincott, Tony Underhill and Robin Wallace.

Quintin Wood



Gerald Soworka
Atheists and flapping birds intimidate her and other people's nudity offends her
Photo: Quintin Wood

Collectors

Pinnacles Gallery

13 December–1 February 2009

The phenomena (or arguably, the affliction) of 'collecting' is the subject of *Collectors*, an exhibition at Pinnacles Gallery. The curators have combined photographs of collections from the local community, with a very personal insight via video recordings into the collecting and hoarding habits of five local contemporary artists. The featured artists are avid collector and print-maker Ron McBurnie, Donna Foley, and sculptors Alison McDonald, Anthony Cuthbertson and Barbara Neunhoffer.

The range of objects that people collect is exhaustive and often bizarre. Predictable articles include antiques, books, bottles, souvenirs, records, postcards, figurines, sports memorabilia and vintage posters. The practice of collecting has become firmly entrenched in popular culture, especially now with the advent of e-Bay and similar sources, which expand both a collectors marketplace and knowledge of their subject.

Accepted reasons for collecting include for pleasure, for profit and to learn about history. Others, including several of the artists featured, don't consider themselves as collectors as such, more people who accumulate 'stuff', with the intention of using it later. Collecting is far from a recent phenomenon, however. Sigmund Freud was renowned as a collector, amassing some 3000 Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Chinese antiquities.

Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia (1672–1725), collected natural history specimens from different parts of the world and established his own *Kunstkammer* (cabinet of curios). More curious, however, was his collection of teeth, which he extracted himself.

Juxtaposed against photographs of community members' collections of model trains, artefacts and curios, samples of Alison McDonald's collections of keys, nails, screws, washers and plastic shopping bags seem incongruous in their acrylic tubes. Close inspection



Alison McDonald
Julie Gough on the big dipper
Photo: Sue Tilley

of her art work, and listening to the supporting video presentation place these items in context as both a medium for her work and a source of inspiration. McDonald's work typically involves using multiples of a single object, which often results in the quality of the finished work contrasting the quality of the individual material. Industrial nails and nuts, typically accepted as masculine, mundane and functional are reincarnated into a delicate, whimsical and feminine slipper—*Persian Bottlebrush*. Drawing inspiration from both her collection, and her garden, the heel of the slipper resembles a bottlebrush stem, with pods made from tiny hexagonal nuts.

Similarly, Ron McBurnie draws from his collections in producing his artwork. Although his collections of vinyl LPs and prints aren't defaced to produce his own work, their influence is strong. McBurnie plays the LPs in his studio while he creates work by reinterpreting the subjects in old prints into a contemporary local context. He comments that the music influences the art, adding multiple layers of meaning and enjoyment.

Natural textile artist Barbara Neunhoffer light-heartedly comments that her family see her less as a collector and more 'a person who hoards stuff!' A common theme between the artists is that others fail to value the accumulation in the way the artist does. Neunhoffer collects and sorts quantities of organic materials for use in her woven forms.



Anthony Cuthbertson
Detail of *Displacement*
Photo: Sue Tilley

Each genre of material is bundled, and displayed until it is reincarnated as sculpture. Neunhoffer sees beauty in the bundles of raw material, which is evident in her work. She clearly values form and texture, and the impact of the artwork is enhanced by the shadow it casts, as is McDonalds work.

Donna Foley has amassed hundreds of photographic images of graffiti works from around the country. She explains her appreciation of street art hails from teaching drawing to two young men, whose style seemed to be incompatible with traditional art theory. Through discussion and investigation, she discovered that graffiti has strong links with chirographic culture, such as the ancient manuscripts of medieval Europe. The employment of text and symbolism is evident in both. Foley has drawn from both chirographic and graffiti styles in her work. This is evident in *Kings Nol from the Book of Acts*, a digital photographic image on canvas. The intricate detail and richness of the image are evocative of both manuscript and graffiti.

Aged and decaying timber and other nautical materials form the basis for Anthony Cuthbertson's collection and artwork. He speculates that his fondness of material with a maritime history may have its roots in his living on a boat for 11 years. Like many collectors the sheer quantity of his accumulation is at times



Barbara Neunhoffer
Photo: Sue Tilley

a source of discord with his partner. He comments that he hopes to be able to use it before the borers and termites do.

The history of the material he uses, and the character they gain through age adds depth to his artworks. *Displacement* originated from rotting timber stumps, which he replaced on a house. A section of blackened, deteriorating oregon pine, sanded back to reveal beautiful wood, leads the viewer to appreciate the

tenacity and strength of nature, defying man and time.

Collectors offers a fascinating insight into the passions and eccentricities of collectors and artists alike.

Sue Tilley

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